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ENGLISH CONSPIRACY AND DISSENT, 1660-1674, I.

THE death of Oliver Cromwell on September 3, 1658, assured the ultimate downfall of the so-called Puritan cause, but the catastrophe was not as sudden as many men had hoped and prophesied. It was not until seventeen months of rivalry between Rump Parliament politicians and Cromwellian army generals had brought administration to the verge of dissolution that order began to emerge from chaos with the accession of General Monck to a seat in the Council of State, and a determining voice in affairs. It was his first care on entering the Council to drive from it, from the army and from the Commons the leaders of the extreme party, and the disintegration of that party, long since begun in personal and political rivalries, was now rapidly completed. As soon as matters so shaped themselves as to render proscription moderately safe, such of its leaders as could be secured were arrested. The return of the King completed the destruction of the extremists. The army and navy, where they were strong, were reduced. The old officers and officials were rapidly replaced by royalists. Of the remaining revolutionary leaders, excluded from indemnity, some fled into exile, some were arrested to die on the scaffold or in prison, the rest were put under bond and surveillance. By the middle of 1661, of that long list of men who had lent strength to the Cromwellian rule few or none remained alive in England who had not given security to the King or entered his service. No single event of the Restoration was of more importance than this. It was not merely revenge for the past, it was a guarantee for the future. The brain of the extreme party was thus destroyed, the centres of national disaffection removed, and the opposition to the new régime was deprived of those men who alone were able to make it dangerous.

But what of the other thousands, the disbanded soldiers and sailors, the sectaries who saw their dearest liberties threatened by Anglican and Royalist reaction, the lesser officers and officials, the purchasers of lands now reclaimed by church and state? The answer has many times been given. It is essentially that of Pepys's Puritan friend, Blackburne, that wherever was to be found a carter more steady, a blacksmith more industrious, a workman more sober, he was a soldier of the old army. The mind pictures a citizen

soldiery, like that which fought the American Civil War, returning again to peaceful pursuits, seeking no further triumphs in war or politics. This view of the defeated party has done much to strengthen the conception of the Restoration as an interlude rather than a connecting link between revolutions, an interlude in which the court played the main part and the Puritans remained to furnish material for loyal satire. But it requires no very profound study of the history of the Restoration to see that this fails to explain many of its phenomena. It is the purpose of this paper to consider another element of this fallen party—those who did not quietly submit to their fate—during the period of their greatest and most influential activity, the first dozen years of the reign of Charles II.

They had not been wholly idle during the later months of 1660 when the troops were being re-officered, disarmed and disbanded under the stern personal supervision of the Lord General, and that process had not taken place without scattered and ineffective attempts at resistance. When the Convention Parliament which had recalled the King was dissolved in January, 1661, without securing legal guarantees for toleration, its dispersion was signalized by the outbreak of a handful of old Fifth Monarchy soldiers under a London cooper, Venner, which terrorized the metropolis for three days. Slight as the danger was, it produced important results. It enabled the Anglicans as a party of law and order, to secure a larger majority in the Commons during the ensuing elections, than they might otherwise have had. It enabled the crown to fortify itself by the retention of a larger force of troops, by the refurbishing of the old legal weapons against sectaries and disturbance, and by creating a secret service which played no small part in the ensuing events. Above all it roused in the dominant Anglican party a passion of hate and fear, dangerous in itself, doubly dangerous when played on by designing men for their own ends. This spirit was clearly visible in the newly elected House of Commons which met in May, 1661, and in the Savoy conference of Anglican and dissenting clergy called about the same time to discuss the religious situation. By the middle of July each had adjourned, and the cause of reaction was seen to be supreme, in the conference where comprehension of the Presbyterians was rejected by the Anglican ecclesiastical authorities no less than toleration of the sects, and in Parliament where the dominant party committed itself strongly to church and crown.¹

Meanwhile the government spies had been active. Meetings

¹ *Parl. Hist.*, IV. 182-222.

of the sectaries were broken up, preachers and petty leaders seized, and hundreds of worshipers, especially Quakers and Anabaptists, thrown into prison.² In particular every effort was made to stamp out the literature by which the proscribed party sought to rouse its people. The *Mirabilis Annus*, the *Phoenix of the Solemn League and Covenant*,³ the *Book of Prodigies* and that of the *Wise Virgins*,⁴ with scores of others, filled with the language of prophecy, shadowed forth the fall of the monarchy and the recall of the godly to power. Printed in secret, smuggled from hand to hand, carried by itinerant booksellers, peddlers and carters, sold from house to house, or secretly at fairs, these found their way everywhere.⁵ A licenser of the press was appointed to repress the evil.⁶ Booksellers and printers, their wives, their apprentices and helpers were arrested, houses searched, carriers' carts overhauled, tracts and books and unbound sheets seized and burned by the thousand.⁷ Sir Roger L'Estrange, the licenser, lately declared that in three years he had destroyed editions of six hundred such tracts. The printers in many cases made a strong defence. Some of them found powerful patrons, among whom were noted such men as William Howard of Escrick, and even the Presbyterian councillor, the Earl of Anglesey.⁸ But as time went on this evil was checked, though it was never quite destroyed.

In all this London was the forefront of offence, and in other matters as well the City caused no little uneasiness. In the elections to Parliament it had returned four strong dissenters, and letters then intercepted by the government revealed its hostility to unlimited monarchy and episcopacy.⁹ The spies sent through its streets and environs now found their way into public houses to count the men and horses there, into churches and conventicles to note those present and the language used, into the jails to worm secrets from prisoners or enlist them as informers.¹⁰ They reported that men looked forward to "another bout," when Anabaptist joined Presbyterian, that dangerous men were coming to the city in large numbers, that even certain royal advisers were implicated in agita-

² Among them John Bunyan. *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1661-1662, pp. 23, 54, 87.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 54, 235, 426.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 104, 106, 109, 128, 173, 184.

⁵ Cf. especially Giles and Elizabeth Calvert "arrested for the usual practices", *passim* as above.

⁶ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1670, pp. 369, 502; *id.*, 1661-1662, p. 282.

⁷ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1661-1662, pp. 104 ff.; *id.*, 1663, pp. 193, 434 ff.

⁸ *Id.*, 1661, pp. 109, 287, 327.

⁹ *Id.*, 1661-1662, p. 396 *passim* to 418; *id.*, 1660-1661, pp. 535-542.

¹⁰ *Id.*, 1661-1662, pp. 81-208 *passim*.

tion, and that prayers were offered up for "a leader to come and redeem Zion", in such churches as All Hallows the Great and St. Sepulchre's.¹¹ City authorities were accordingly urged by the court to suppress sedition, to reform the militia and the night watch, and to ensure the return of churchmen and royalists to city offices in the ensuing elections, and these admonitions were accompanied by arrests and the dispersal of meetings on every hand.¹²

The investigation soon developed the fact that the Post Office, which almost alone among the public offices had escaped reorganization, was a centre of sedition.¹³ The former headquarters of the republicans had been the Commonwealth Club in Bow Street. This under the same management but under a new name, the Nonsuch House, was the chief resort of the postmaster, Colonel Bishop, and many of the clerks, who maintained the republican traditions of the place.¹⁴ Reinforced by similar information against many postmasters throughout England,¹⁵ this news roused the administration to action. After violent opposition Colonel Bishop was finally replaced by a follower of the Duke of York, one Daniel O'Neale, many clerks and postmasters were dismissed and the service reorganized.¹⁶ This was the more important in that through the Post Office passed all manner of political information, of peaceful and warlike opposition to the administration. The inspired cordwainer in Reading who was defended against the county authorities, and even against a King's messenger by the corporation;¹⁷ the new mayor of Coventry, a dissenting butcher, formerly Lambert's recruiting agent;¹⁸ and the prospective mayor of Preston, a "decimator and sequestrator", whom the loyalists urged the government to arrest or "otherwise handsomely frighten",¹⁹ personified the more peaceful endeavors of the rejected party to entrench themselves in the boroughs. Of more violent designs the administration in this summer of 1661 found little definite trace. Reports of secret meetings, night ridings, fanaticism attendant on the news of the regicide

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 73, 81, 110-123 *passim*.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 73-123 *passim*, 70, 161, 179.

¹³ *Ibid.*, as above, and pp. 86, 176, etc.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 55-57, 86 ff.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 173, 176, 250, 385.

¹⁶ *Id.*, 1663-1664, pp. 156-157; *ibid.*, pp. 80, 92, 480; cf. also Jusserand, *A French Ambassador at the Court of Charles II.*, p. 193.

¹⁷ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1661-1662, pp. 116-123, *passim*.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 90 ff.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

executions, rumors of risings, were the most that could be unearthed.²⁰

But a week before Parliament met there came into Secretary Nicholas's hands information of the utmost importance. It was to the effect that on November 10 or 11 a certain Richard Churme, of Wichenford, Worcestershire, had come upon a stranger lying by the roadside sorting letters. When he had gone Churme found a package which had been accidentally dropped, and secured it before the stranger discovered his loss and returned to look for it. The package was sent to Sir John Packington, J.P. and M.P. for Worcestershire, and, after copies had been made and sent to neighboring magistrates, it was forwarded to London with several examinations taken in regard to it. The two letters enclosed purported to have been written by one "Ann Ba" to a Mr. Sparry, parson of Martley, and to a Captain Yarrington of the old army. They spoke of the need of money, of "the company" having increased to 300, of an oath taken November 1, of news sent to Hereford, Gloucester, Worcester and Shrewsbury, of "a fatal blow against their adversaries," of "hopes for merry days", and "that the business would soon be done".²¹ Two persons deposed further that Captain Yarrington had said he "had a commission to cure people of the simples", that "there would be news ere long", and that Colonel Turton's man had said "they" were to rendezvous at Edgehill the night of November 9. All this was confirmed and enlarged from apparently independent sources,²² and many circumstances combined to heighten the probability of the information. The West country and Midland loyalists were greatly excited. Alarms were sent in every direction. Neighboring towns, especially those named in the letters, were put in a state of defence.²³ The militia was called out, and many suspicious characters seized. Sparry and Yarrington were secured, examined before the Worcester justices, and sent to London. There before the Secretary and the Council they "denied all", and no further results appeared.²⁴

²⁰ Staffordshire, Shropshire, Chester, Carlisle, Wilts, Windsor, Lowestoft, Durham, Dublin, Kent, London, etc. *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1661, pp. 79-134 *passim*; *id.*, 1661-1662, pp. 62-212 *passim*.

²¹ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1661-1662, pp. 143-148.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 199.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

²⁴ Cf. Calamy, *Nonconformist Memorials*, ed. Palmer, I. 30, 31. Yarrington escaped, went to London, was recaptured, put in the Marshalsea and kept for some time as a prisoner or spy. In 1681 he published an account of this alleged plot, apparently in connection with the Exclusion agitation. Ralph, I. 53, quotes an extract. For Yarrington's examination cf. *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, June 23, 1662, p. 417. For Sparry cf. Calamy *ut supra*.

Such was the story which made its way through England on the eve of the new session and met the members as they came up to London. It was not, on its face, wholly probable. Careful investigation would have enabled the administration to establish its value without much question. But there was neither time, nor opportunity, nor, one may suspect, inclination, to look too closely into information which was so extremely useful to the dominant party. They took full advantage of it. The royal speech was largely devoted to the "Presbyterian plot". The Commons embodied the information given them by Packington and others in a message to the Lords, requesting the Upper House to join them in asking for a proclamation to expel "loose and suspicious persons" from London and Westminster.²⁵ The proclamation was issued²⁶ and, that none of the accompaniments of popular alarm might be wanting, one of the Vennerites, John James, was convicted of persisting in seditious practices and executed a week after the session began.²⁷ It was no wonder that under the stimulus of such excitement the Anglicans were able to force through the Corporation Act introduced the preceding June. By its provisions the commissioners were empowered to root out from those "nests of sedition", the borough corporations, not merely those refusing the oaths of allegiance and supremacy and that renouncing the Solemn League and Covenant, but all who were hostile to the government even though they took the oaths and repudiated the Covenant. Against this measure the Presbyterians fought desperately, and, in spite of the alleged plot, they might have had some success. But on December 19 the King sent a message to the Houses concerning a new plot, asking advice and co-operation in suppressing the danger. The appeal was effective. The Corporation Act was passed and a committee appointed to sit during the approaching recess to investigate the new conspiracy. Thus for the third time the fear of the sectaries played a decisive part in Restoration politics.²⁸

The committee thus appointed was furnished with information by the Chancellor to the effect that a design to subvert the government had been on foot since before the return of the King. The Long Parliament men, the Commonwealth party, the City, the disbanded soldiers, the purchasers of lands, the Independents and the Fifth Monarchy men were implicated and each group, save the

²⁵ *Parl. Hist.*, IV. 222-224.

²⁶ *Secret Hist.*, I. 426; *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1661-1662, p. 179.

²⁷ Howell, *State Trials*, vol. VI., pp. 114 ff.; *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1661-1662, p. 617.

²⁸ *Parl. Hist.*, IV. 224 ff.; *Statutes*, 13 Car. II., stat. 2, c. 1.

first, furnished three members to a committee which sat generally in the old republican headquarters in Bow Street and thence directed the affair. Their first care had been the choice of Parliament men, especially from London, as a precedent for the country at large, the second a petition for a preaching ministry and liberty of conscience. Their other plans were inferred from the fact that there was an inner committee of seven, bound by oaths of secrecy, chosen, it was said, to direct the design, to raise men and collect money.²⁹ Five of the seven, including Sir James Harrington and Major Wildman,³⁰ reputed chiefs of the republicans, had already been arrested. The former was charged with having presided over the committee of twenty-one in the preceding March. He was examined by Sir George Carteret, Sir Edward Walker, and his kinsman the Earl of Lauderdale, with small result. He denied all knowledge of the alleged meetings in Bow Street. Though he admitted his acquaintance with Wildman, Barebones, Neville and Portman, he declared he had seen none of them for a long time save Neville, and with him he had dined publicly in the safest company in England, those devout royalists, Gascoigne and Legge.³¹ In other quarters the commissioners were more successful, and on January 10 Mr. Waller reported the result to the Commons. There was to have been a meeting in London on December 10 or 11, and Shrewsbury, Coventry and Bristol were to have been seized in January or February. The stories of Salmon and Wildman did not agree and the former had a list of 160 old officers. The plan was to overthrow the government or at least to give notice abroad that England was divided against itself. The regicides on the Continent were in the plot, which was fomented by certain foreign princes. Arms were bought and the plotters needed but a footing to succeed. They were to have begun with assassination, which moved one of the committee to discover the design. Upon this the leaders had been seized and troops of horse sent to Bristol and Coventry.³²

The immediate danger as revealed in this report does not, at this distance, seem to have been great, but its effect on the Commons was very considerable. Vane and Lambert were hurried to trial, the militia and the revenue bills were expedited, and the treasons

²⁹ *Journals H. C.*, XI. 359 b. ff.; *Parl. Hist.*, IV. 227; *Hist. MSS. Comm. Reports*, XII. 9, p. 51.

³⁰ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1661-1662, pp. 253, 347. Bremen, Parker, Gladman and Berry arrested May 18, 1662, *ibid.*, p. 376. Barrow, *ibid.*, p. 354.

³¹ Howell, *State Trials*, VI. 114 ff.; Lister, *Life of Clarendon*, II. 279-281.

³² *Parl. Hist.*, IV. 226 ff.; Howell, *State Trials*, VI. 114 ff.; *Journals H. C.*, XI. 359 b., 476; *Secret Hist.*, I. 426-427 n.; Rapin says 140 officers.

committee revived. The Militia Bill and the Hearth Money Act were pushed through, together with acts against Quakers and seditious publications. Finally, on May 9, was passed the great Act of Uniformity compelling all preachers and teachers to use the Anglican ritual and prayer book after the 24th of the following August. The court and administration had reiterated the dangers which threatened the nation throughout the session, and emphasized them again in the closing speeches which were largely devoted to the "humors and spirits of men too boisterous for soft remedies", "refractory spirits of strong, malicious corrupted understanding".³³ Meanwhile government activities outside the Houses had been no less reactionary. In the preceding September the "Cromwellian bodies", including those of Blake and Pym, had been removed from the Abbey and thrown into a pit in the adjoining churchyard.³⁴ In April Colonels Barkstead, Okey and Corbet, who had been treacherously seized in Holland by Sir George Downing, were executed,³⁵ and on June 14 Vane suffered the same fate.³⁶ The bishops had meanwhile taken their places in the Lords, a Catholic queen had come to England, and negotiations had begun for the sale of Dunkirk, last of the Cromwellian conquests, to France.³⁷

In the face of these events it is no wonder the discontented party was roused to fury. They denied the charges of plotting and accused the royalists of having manufactured plot and evidence alike to further their political aims.³⁸ Meetings multiplied and the proscribed pamphlets again appeared,³⁹ with the usual rumors of insurrection. Talk of "gallant times", the purchase of horses and even the issue of commissions and enlisting of men were reported.⁴⁰ The conspirators, it was said, had settled on the King and the Rump as their rallying cry, and planned to rouse the people with tracts, wait for a rising in Scotland and seize the Tower and Whitehall when the troops went north.⁴¹ The old Parliamentarians in Ireland, the Fifth Monarchy men in England, were declared ripe for revolt but were held back by the leaders in London, who waited "till the vulgar were pricked by the late acts". The alliance of Independents

³³ *Parl. Hist.*, IV. 230-254.

³⁴ Kennet, *Register*.

³⁵ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1662, p. 344; Pepys, *Diary*.

³⁶ Howell, *State Trials*, VI. 1 ff. (trials of regicides).

³⁷ Clarendon, *Life, Continuation*, 1662, *passim*.

³⁸ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1661-1662, p. 316.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 398, 411.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 258, 263, 295, 385, 398.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 404.

and Presbyterians was reported to be at hand and the Commonwealth men only waited Presbyterian aid to rise.⁴² In all this there was no doubt much wild talk, but some circumstances substantiated these rumors. Independents, Anabaptists, Socinians and Fifth Monarchy men set apart a day to pray for Vane and Lambert, and there was reason to believe that, had the general been condemned, an effort would have been made by his old followers to rescue him.⁴³ Kent, Gainsborough, Uxbridge and Dunkirk furnished news of disaffection. A Presbyterian "lecture driver" in the west hanged himself on hearing of the Act of Uniformity. Three obstinate members of the Newbury corporation, first of many such, were sent up to the Council by the commissioners.⁴⁴ From every direction came news of opposition to the administration policy furnishing a fertile field for conspiracy.

On its part the Council warned Governor Rutherford of Dunkirk of the designs on that place, ordered the justices of Southwark to suppress sedition there, and the Southampton authorities to send up the names of those obstructing the town government and "wholesome contributions".⁴⁵ In London the Lord Mayor and General Browne were commanded to suppress seditious meetings and when the City chose two aldermen obnoxious to the court, they were replaced with safer men by the King, and orders issued that only well-affected men should be chosen for sheriffs.⁴⁶ Most important of all measures since the disbanding of the army, was the garrisoning or destruction of the strongholds throughout England in this summer of 1662, "removing that temptation to seditious spirits to seize them, evidenced in the late desperate design". Hull and Chepstow were repaired, Shrewsbury and Chester garrisoned, and orders given to "slight or destroy" other fortifications. Under the direction of Albemarle, the lord lieutenants and deputy lieutenants thus supervised the dismantling of Coventry, Northampton, Gloucester, and "that turbulent town of Taunton". The last two proved difficult, and in Taunton the delay and disaffection of the authorities evoked severe reprimand from the government and stringent orders to destroy the works and set the militia in order.⁴⁷ This last was a matter of much importance everywhere.

⁴² *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1661-1662, pp. 398, 408, 412, 418, 448 and *passim*.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 397, 411.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 255, 287, 304, 307 and *passim* to 419. Pepys, v. d. June 1662.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 399, 400, 417.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 376, 408, 416, 543, 544, 548. The best account of the Dissenters' state of mind is to be found in a long letter, *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, p. 63.

⁴⁷ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1661-1662, pp. 422-511 *passim*.

The revising of the entire list of deputy lieutenants and the reorganization of the militia under the late act proceeded slowly, and from every direction, especially in those places where local forces were most needed, the West, the Northwest and the City, came complaints of inefficient, dilatory and even disaffected militiamen.⁴⁸

This was more serious in that strong opposition developed against the government policy in many places. The corporation commissioners met difficulties in districts as widely separated as Bristol, Norwich and Lancaster.⁴⁹ In Chard they could not find enough honest men to carry on the government and the mayor asked that the town's charter be recalled.⁵⁰ The hearth money officials were in like straits, London being especially stubborn against them.⁵¹ With this, as the summer wore on, the rumors of insurrection increased. In July instructions were issued to all lord lieutenants and deputy lieutenants to be on their guard against a republican rising,⁵² and from every direction warnings came to the administration of prospective disturbance.⁵³ The government feared, not without reason, that some attempt might be made when the Act of Uniformity went into effect in August.⁵⁴ In addition to the garrisoning of Chester, therefore, Shrewsbury and Coventry, troops were quartered in Axminster and Taunton.⁵⁵ The day passed without disturbance, but the news which reached the government after the act took effect increased in volume and importance.⁵⁶ Intercepted letters indicated that recruiting was in an advanced stage, and the situation seemed so serious that not merely were many arrests made of old officers but in Exeter, Plymouth and Portsmouth militia gathered and Exeter Castle was occupied for the King.⁵⁷ Similar precautions were taken elsewhere, especially as evidence accumulated that a rising had been set for October 28.⁵⁸ On that day 80 or 100 horsemen actually appeared in St. Albans,⁵⁹ but no general movement resulted, and as the year drew to a close it seemed that, after all, the whole business was a figment of royalist imagination or a device

⁴⁸ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1661-1662, as above, and pp. 509-551 *passim*.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 490, 517, 578.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 539.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 459.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 442. Cf. also pp. 466, 538-539, 581, 604.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 428-603 *passim*.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 434-455 *passim*.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 441-455.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 481, 519, 541.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, as above, and pp. 538, 551.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 443-579 *passim*.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 529; *Hist. MSS. Comm. Reports*, VII. 463.

of Anglican politicians, as the nonconformists maintained. Yet this was not wholly true. Sufficient evidence reached the government to make it fearful of an outbreak, and its precautions indicated its fears. If plots existed these measures had kept them from maturing. On the other hand if there were plotters they had eluded discovery. It was not from lack of energy that the government had failed to bring home to individuals the charge of conspiracy, nor for lack of information. From week to week, almost from day to day, prisoners and reports reached them. As one reads the mass of evidence that accumulated he wonders that the Council found time to do anything besides hunting down plots and plotters.⁶⁰ The result was the same, rumors of risings and designs, scores of prisoners, hundreds of letters and warnings and informations, but no evidence on which men could be hanged. In their anxiety they did not neglect, if we may believe their enemies, the fomenting of false conspiracy to fathom the real one or provide victims for execution. August 24 and 28, September 2 and 3, and October 28, however, passed without serious disturbance, and though men spoke and wrote of "the late horrid design" the administration had obtained from all its activities nothing on which to base prosecutions much less executions.⁶¹

But on November 2 the government arrested in London a certain Captain Foster of the old army, and his hostler, on charges which had come into its hands some time before. Through him, his friends and his servants, information was secured against a number of others who were likewise seized, among them Ensign Tong, Captain Lee and Colonel Kenrick of the old army and a certain Platter. Tong confessed that he had been a member of a council which sat at the Wheatsheaf in Thames Street, whose design was insurrection.⁶² Through him, through one Stubbs, and especially from a minister named Riggs,⁶³ enough was learned to bring six men to trial at Old Bailey on December 11. From the information and testimony thus adduced it appeared that there was a plot to enter Whitehall, seize the King and the Duke of York, secure Windsor

⁶⁰ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, as above, and many places besides; orders, warrants, etc., on almost every page in 1661-1662, 1662 and 1663. On October 14 the King actually ordered the archbishops to "tune the pulpits" after the Elizabethan manner. *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1661-1662, p. 517.

⁶¹ As above, and Pepys, September 3, 1662; *Hist. MSS. Comm. Reports*, VII. 463, XII. 9, p. 52; Ludlow, *Memoirs*, ed. Firth, II. 344, etc.

⁶² *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1661-1662, pp. 540-541.

⁶³ Or Ridge, who became master of a ship, and was killed in 1666. Bradford said that he would kill the King with his halberd if the others failed. Tong had bullets to shoot the King at review.

Castle, bring over some frigates whose crews were ready to revolt, and thus begin a revolution. A council of six was directing the plot through a council of forty.⁶⁴ The government did not assert that the men brought to trial were the real heads of the design. "Other wits than these poor contemptible agitators", these "outboughs of conspiracy", laid the plans, it was declared. None the less these were all found guilty. Four of them, Tong, Stubbs, Gibbs and Phillips were executed, two were reprieved and of these one, curiously enough, ultimately became royal hydrographer.⁶⁵

But this was not the end of the matter. One John Bradley, messenger, spy, and trepanner, or fomentor of sedition for profit, and a fellow-informer, John Baker, a Cromwellian life-guardsman turned tinker, appeared in the trial of Tong and his fellows as witnesses for the state.⁶⁶ They now came forward with further revelations. Baker, examined in the King's presence December 15, deposed that two former comrades of his, Smith and Kent or Kentish, now the King's guard, had intimated their willingness to admit men to Whitehall to kill the King. Seditious meetings, he declared, were held at the house of a Mr. Ward in Redcross Street, and a plan had been on foot to shoot the King at the review of Sir John Robinson's regiment some time before, for which Tong had provided bullets to the numerous fanatics in the ranks, who would have killed Charles had he happened to come before them as they were drawn up. Many were arrested in consequence of his revelations, among them Johnston, another halberdier who was especially named, Kent, Captain Cates, Captain Faircloth, John Jackson, John Whitehall and Mr. Ward. These, with one exception, denied all charges save that of having met at Ward's house, and denounced Baker as an unmitigated liar and scoundrel. Johnston however implicated a long list of men; three ministers, Owen, Kiffin and Cockain; a Mr. Caitness; Cornet Billing and Colonel Carr; a post-office employee, Roden; a Mr. Helme; a City merchant, Gavin Lawry; a Mr. Dundas; and finally his former master, namesake, and probably kinsman, Archibald Johnston, Lord Warriston, once a considerable figure in Cromwellian times, but now ill and a fugitive in France. Most of these men were seized, and Lawry was held in long and vexatious imprisonment.⁶⁷ Bradley was rewarded

⁶⁴ Macpherson, *Life of James II.*, 1663; Howell, *State Trials*, VI. 226 ff.; *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1661-1662, pp. 546, 588, 600, 602.

⁶⁵ Rapin, *History of England*, III. 864 and n.; *Secret Hist.*, I. 461-462.

⁶⁶ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1661-1662, pp. 593-595, 610-614.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 591-595, 613 ff.; *id.*, 1663-1664, pp. 12, 27-37 *passim*.

for his share in the affair by being made King's messenger.⁶⁸ Johnston and the rest, save Warriston, seem to have escaped with their lives.⁶⁹ Warriston, by the aid of the French government, was seized, carried to England, thence to Scotland, where, despite his illness, his wife's intercession, his complete submission and his offers to aid the government, he was executed in the following June.⁷⁰ Later in the year Baker, who had apparently been kept in hope of further revelations, was hanged.⁷¹ He was the last victim of the so-called "plot of 1662". This, it has been charged, was no plot at all. The whole matter had been arranged by Bradley and Baker, with, if not by, the government.⁷² Without more definite proof such a charge is hard to maintain or destroy. But there are circumstances which give some color to the administration's contention. A mass of outside testimony indicated a revolutionary movement on foot. Certain letters involving Warriston and Lawry contained what was at least very suspicious language, and several of the men executed admitted on the scaffold the existence of a plot.⁷³

At all events there was enough in the situation revealed by the government agents to demand, in the opinion of many at the head of affairs, something more than arrests and executions.⁷⁴ From Parliament it was evident that nothing besides repressive measures could be expected. But to some who took their cue from the King it seemed that some way might be found for accommodation with moderate Dissent, which, leaving the Anglican supremacy untouched, would allow the freedom of conscience promised from Breda to peaceable Nonconformity, and thus, by reconciling the mass of sectaries, remove any general support of conspiracy. Desiring as he did some relief for the Catholics, a less shrewd man than the King might well have thought to find in the Nonconformists a popular basis for Catholic relief under guise of general toleration. Moreover such testimony as the plots of 1662 had just brought out indicated that the vengeance of the sectaries was chiefly directed against him, and he had little desire to wear a martyr's crown, especially in a cause of which he did not approve. Might he not then declare his own policy, and try to muster strength in the Commons and the

⁶⁸ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, p. 68.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 25, 32, etc., to 179; cf. *infra*.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 238. Cf. Ludlow, ed. Firth, to contrary.

⁷² Ludlow, *ut supra*.

⁷³ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663, pp. 26 to 614 *passim*; Howell, *State Trials*, VI. 226 ff.

⁷⁴ Jusserand, *A French Ambassador*, p. 196.

country to prevent its recall? At least he might avert from himself to Parliament, where it belonged, the wrath of the sectaries. The Anglicans dared not depose him, the Dissenters might be won, the Catholics relieved, and the prerogative advanced. Accordingly four days after the execution of Tong and his fellows, on December 26, 1662, appeared a royal Declaration of Indulgence embodying this policy which was to play such a large part in affairs. "Designed to quiet the rising disorders" it proposed "to set bounds to the hopes of some and the fears of others". It denied the charges that the King desired to break the Act of Indemnity, or set up military rule under pretence of the plots, that he had broken the Declaration of Breda by signing the Act of Uniformity, or that he favored the Papists. It declared, on the contrary, that the King favored the Act of Uniformity, but that for the sake of some he desired to dispense with certain provisions, and he encouraged his subjects "with minds happily composed by his indulgence" to apply themselves to increase the general prosperity.⁷⁵

This result at least it was never destined to achieve. Whatever effect it was supposed to have on those bent on overthrowing the King there was no doubt of its effect on those bent on upholding him. The Anglicans were disturbed and angry,⁷⁶ and many persons, even those Dissenters who seized the advantage thus offered, doubted the King's sincerity, attributing the whole affair to Catholic machination. Between the Acts and the Declaration the local authorities were at a stand, large numbers of Quakers and others were released, and conventicles multiplied. The church authorities bitterly resented the Declaration, and the Bishop of London took immediate steps to define his position. Ten days after the Declaration appeared he had the Presbyterian leader, Calamy, arrested for preaching contrary to law. And though Calamy was presently released on proof that his sermon contained no reflections on the government and had, in fact, been preached with the "privity" of certain Lords of the Council, the incident did not tend to calm the political elements.⁷⁷ The great question however remained, what would Parliament do when it met in February? The six weeks which intervened were filled with excitement. The *Phoenix* and the *Prodigies* again appeared and were again suppressed, together with the reports of the

⁷⁵ *Parl. Hist.*, IV. 259; *Secret Hist.*, I. 462 ff.; *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1662-1663, pp. 602-603.

⁷⁶ Pepys, February 25, 1663, to April 1, 1663, *passim*; *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, January to February, 1663, *passim*.

⁷⁷ Pepys, January 5, 16, 1663; *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, pp. 8, 10; cf. also Calamy, *Nonconformist Memorials*.

late treason trial.⁷⁸ Information accumulated indicating that a real conspiracy was on foot.⁷⁹ From Carlisle and Reading, from Norfolk and Cornwall, from Southwark and Barnet came news and prisoners portending disturbance.⁸⁰ The arrests in January increased in number and importance, and the alarms with them. An intercepted letter indicating that some attempt might be made on the assembling of Parliament led to the dispatch of troops to Farnham and the securing of Guildford and Portsmouth against surprise.⁸¹ The refugees on the Continent became the object of special solicitude. The most disquieting reports were received from the North, many arrests were made there, and many prominent men, including an alderman of York, were imprisoned.⁸² Several of those most wanted, however, escaped and this was the more unfortunate in that it seemed from the examination of those taken that a widespread design existed in an advanced state of preparation. Evidence appeared, though it was at first minimized by the York authorities, that men were being enlisted, arms secured, and commissions and pay promised to volunteers.⁸³

There is no doubt that the court was much disturbed over the increasing probability of a rising.⁸⁴ The Corporation, Uniformity and Hearth Money acts in England, the church question in Scotland and the land question in Ireland had roused deep and bitter discontent. The administration knew, if Parliament did not, how widespread and dangerous the disaffection was. But when the Houses came together on February 18 it was seen that they were much opposed to the Declaration, even as a cure for disturbances. In answer to the speech from the throne which defended the policy of indulgence the Commons voted overwhelmingly (200 to 30) to request the recall of the Declaration. One feature of the royal policy ruined whatever chance it might otherwise have had for endorsement by Parliament. This was the King's appeal in behalf of the Catholics, which united Anglican and Nonconformist against him. It was in vain that Lord Roberts pleaded for a measure granting the dispensing power, and the court strained its resources to save the prerogative. A bill to prevent the growth of popery,

⁷⁸ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, pp. 27, 53, 180.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, almost every page.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-57 *passim*.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 44, 46.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 16; Pepys, January 23, 1663.

⁸³ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, pp. 26, 91-92.

⁸⁴ Pepys, May 25, October 10, 19, 27, November 4, 1662; *cf.* also Jusserand, *A French Ambassador*, s. d.

another forbidding the employment of all not loyal to the late King and the church, and a request for a proclamation against priests and Jesuits showed the temper of the Commons. It was evident that its Nonconformist members preferred persecution to Catholic toleration. Out of doors the same spirit was apparent, and the Dissenters, ready as they were to take advantage of the respite afforded by the Declaration, were more than ever alienated from the King. So great were the jealousies engendered in Parliament that revenue itself seemed likely to suffer. The discussion of supply dragged, and for the first time the Commons seemed disinclined to act promptly, much less generously.

But on June 12 this matter was expedited in a surprising manner. The Houses were summoned to Whitehall and urged by the King in an alarming speech to vote speedy and liberal supply on the ground of imminent danger to the state. He assured them their zeal was never more needed. A plot to seize Dublin Castle had been discovered. The conspiracy was widespread, the danger was not over, the government was taking every step to secure itself, but supply was imperative for arms and garrisons. The appeal was effective. Four subsidies were promptly voted and a bill then pending to better the militia pushed to completion.⁸⁵ Though the King's speech came as a surprise to many, the news it contained was a fortnight old. And long before it had reached London, ever since the assembling of Parliament, in fact, the government had been disturbed by news of imminent danger.⁸⁶ In the wild talk of a Captain Gregory, prisoner of state in the Tower, had been hints of war in Ireland, and a design on Whitehall and the Tower in London.⁸⁷ Early in May intercepted letters which seemed to incriminate two brothers, Richard and Ignatius White, and one James Smart, apparently a recruiting officer of rebellion, came into their hands, but in spite of their utmost efforts could not be unravelled.⁸⁸ Later in the same month came more promising information. An old soldier, Matthew Moreton, of Ingleton, Staffordshire, with great caution, and acting under advice of counsel, deposed that a general rising was planned, that he had been asked to enlist, and told that a party would be in arms in Scotland and Ireland, that a declaration had been printed in Edinburgh, that 40,000 to 50,000 men, mostly old soldiers, were engaged to throw down the

⁸⁵ *Parl. Hist.*, IV. 253 ff.

⁸⁶ Pepys, March 20, April 3, 8, 14, 1663, and below.

⁸⁷ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1661-1662, pp. 604-606; *id.*, 1663, pp. 7, 46, 72.

⁸⁸ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, pp. 72-264 *passim*.

bishops, that the rising had already begun in Ireland, and that the design was so far advanced that it could not be checked by discovery. "The sword will hew before the scythe mows" was the watchword of the revolutionaries, and circumstances seemed to warrant the prophecy.⁸⁰ Increasing unrest was reported in many directions and the posts were constantly tampered with.⁸⁰ As early as March two plots had been unearthed, one in Dublin,⁸¹ the other in Durham, and several arrests made. The man most wanted in the latter design, one Paul Hobson, however, had escaped.⁸² The news from Dublin was not therefore wholly a surprise, least of all to those who understood the situation in Ireland.

The Cromwellian conquest of the Irish had been followed by wholesale confiscation of Catholic and Royalist lands which were granted or sold to the Parliamentary soldiers. After the Restoration a court had been set up to adjudicate what were in most cases hopelessly conflicting claims of the old owners and the new. Its awards had irritated almost every section of the population but most of all the Cromwellians, who suffered most. The dispossessed party, desperate at loss of power and property and hopeless of redress from the authorities, determined to resist by force of arms. A committee of old officers and Parliament men was chosen to direct the movement from Dublin, and it was proposed to seize the Castle and rouse the people to rebellion. Communication was opened with the north of Ireland, Scotland, England and the refugees on the Continent. The first plan was to rise in March, but that failed. The conspirators however persisted in their design. A declaration for liberty of conscience and possession of the lands was printed, and a most ingenious ruse planned for seizing the Castle. Many prominent men were engaged, Colonel Carr to lead the Scots; Ludlow's brother-in-law, Colonel Kempson, and Colonel Jephson; Lecky, a fellow of Trinity College, and his brother-in-law of much fame thereafter, Lieutenant Blood; two old Parliament men, Warren and Thompson; and others, the chief director being a Major Staples. The design was deep-laid and far-reaching, and in the disturbed state of the country was not without some chance of success. But at the last the usual informer appeared in the person of one Philip Alden, who, with Sir Theophilus Jones, revealed the

⁸⁰ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, pp. 152-155, 169.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, January to May, 1663, *passim*.

⁸¹ Pepys, March, 1663, *passim*; Carte, *Life of Ormonde*, VI. 105 ff.

⁸² *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, pp. 83, 91; cf. also *id.*, 1661-1662, pp. 5, 54, 59, 559, August 12, 1661, and November 20, 1662.

plot to the Duke of Ormonde. Prompt steps were taken to secure the Castle and seize the plotters. The country was alarmed, the ministers who had been active agents of the conspiracy were silenced or arrested and warning sent to London. Many of the plotters were arrested. Staples, Jephson, Warren and Thompson were tried and executed in July. Lecky, after every attempt to save him had failed, was brought to the scaffold in December. Blood escaped, first to the north of Ireland, thence taking refuge in Lancashire. Others, including Colonel Carr, found their way to Holland.⁹³

Thus, while the plots in Ireland and northern England had failed, it was apparent, as the King said, that the danger was not over. The more daring and important leaders had escaped, the conspirators' correspondence had not been discovered, the disaffection everywhere increased. On the strength of the revelations, as we have seen, money was voted and a militia bill enacted. It had been determined that no alteration in the forces should be made without the joint assent of Southampton, Albermarle, Morrice and Bennet,⁹⁴ and orders were issued to reorganize the militia under the new act. At the same time and under the same influence the Commons passed a bill to prevent popery and another, the later Conventicle Act, to prevent meetings of the sectaries. These being obstructed in the Lords, they petitioned the King for a proclamation commanding the enforcement of the laws against Protestant and Catholic Dissenters.⁹⁵ The disturbed state of affairs was emphasized by the attempt of the Earl of Bristol to impeach the Chancellor of high treason. Ill drawn and extravagantly urged, the impeachment failed. Bristol was disgraced and obliged to flee.⁹⁶ And, as an unexpected result of his mad attempt, he became a popular hero. The London mob drank openly to his health as the champion of the nation, Catholic though he was, and the keenest interest in his fate was evidenced on every hand. Whatever the motive of Bristol's attack on Clarendon, however futile it proved, it was supported by an extraordinary popular hatred of the Chancellor, a sign of the times not lost on shrewd politicians.⁹⁷ With this and the abstrac-

⁹³ Carte, *Ormonde*, VI. 105 ff., VII. 102; *Secret Hist.*, I. 244 ff.; *Hist. MSS. Comm. Reports*, VIII. 500, 502, and App. I. 263, XV. 7, p. 170, and *Ormonde*, II. 251, III. 71, 124.

⁹⁴ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, p. 143.

⁹⁵ *Parl. Hist.*, IV. 269 ff.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, and *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, p. 254; Clarendon, *Life, Cont.*, 475 ff.; *Secret Hist.*, II. 29 ff.

⁹⁷ Jusserand, *A French Ambassador*, pp. 104 ff., 218; *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, p. 531, and October to November *passim*. Foster said he "would make the streets run blood before Lord Bristol should fall".

tion of a bill for better observance of the Sabbath from the table in the House of Lords, gossip was unusually busy in the last days of the session. The King's speech in proroguing the Houses heightened rather than allayed the uneasiness. He had expected, he said, to have bills against distempers in religion, seditious conventicles and the growth of popery presented to him, but he judged that the Houses had been deterred by fear of reconciling those contradictions in religion in some conspiracy against the public peace. If he lived to meet them again he would present two bills of his own to that end. Meanwhile he asked them to aid the judges in preventing assemblies of Dissenters and in collecting the subsidies. With these words Parliament was prorogued on July 27.⁹⁸

It was no mere alarmist sentiment which prompted this speech nor was it based wholly on the Dublin revelations. From many directions warning of rapidly approaching trouble had been coming in for some time. The number of arrests and examinations increased, a design to burn the ships was reported, an intercepted letter to Lady Vane hinted mysteriously of "a good time coming".⁹⁹ But it was not until a few days before Parliament was prorogued that the information which inspired the royal speech seems to have come into government hands. The once skeptical governor of York, Sir Thomas Gower, had gradually become convinced that there was real danger and urged the administration to take steps to meet it. His information indicated that a plot had been laid in February, that its leaders had taken an oath of secrecy at Durham in March, and established relations with groups in Yorkshire and London. Meetings were thenceforth held by these men with emissaries from Ireland, from Lancashire and Scotland. In May Dr. Richardson, one of the revolutionary leaders, framed a declaration which was submitted to the various groups for alteration, and two men were chosen from each of the dissenting congregations interested to carry on the design. The Scots were invited to join, and it was decided to take advantage of the assizes at York, the first week in August,¹⁰⁰ to seize the city as headquarters of the rebellion. Simultaneous risings were planned in Westmoreland, Durham, Newcastle, Leeds and Berwick, and a ship with arms and ammunition was expected at Shields.¹⁰¹ Unfortunately for the success of

⁹⁸ *Parl. Hist.*, IV. 285-289; Clarendon, *Life, Cont.*, p. 415 ff.

⁹⁹ Cf. especially Captain George Elton and Foynes Urry, *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, pp. 193, 196 and *passim*, 178, 199, and Sir Duncan Campbell's visit to the north of England.

¹⁰⁰ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, pp. 212, 216.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 284.

the plotters one of their number, a Major Greathead, was or became an informer, and with Colonel Smithson, also privy to the plot, revealed it to Gower.¹⁰²

Scarcely had Parliament risen, therefore, when steps were taken to repress the impending disturbance. On August 3 Colonel Freschville was ordered to York with troops of horse and foot.¹⁰³ The lord lieutenant, the Duke of Buckingham, and his deputies repaired to their posts. The militia was set on foot, warnings sent to the authorities in the other counties and towns, and a hundred "chief designers" seized under pretence of attending illegal meetings (August 5-7).¹⁰⁴ These measures averted whatever danger there was and the prisoners were presently released with orders to report any plot or disaffection which came to their notice. Believing their plans unknown they proceeded with their conspiracy.¹⁰⁵ On August 18 a letter from Paul Hobson to John Joplin, gaoler of Durham and one of the contrivers of the plot, was intercepted by the government. Hobson's whereabouts were thus discovered and he was at once arrested and sent to the Tower. There he was forced to testify against his fellows, who, though they did not know it, were thenceforth at the mercy of the government.¹⁰⁶ They planned a rising for September 3, but the York commissioners of militia with the aid of Gower and the Earl of Derby easily prevented it and made several arrests. Hardly was this done, however, when it was reported that this was merely a feint to cover a real design set for October 12. An attempt was then to be made on Whitehall. The King, the Dukes of York and Albemarle, the Treasurer and the Chancellor were to be seized. Newcastle and Tamworth were to be taken as a means of communication with Scotland, Nottingham and Gloucester surprised, the passes over the Severn and Trent thus secured, and Boston fortified as a base of supplies sent from Holland. Ludlow was to command in the west, and there and in the Midlands thousands were enlisted. It was expected that the Guards would be despatched to put down the rising and that the City would revolt on their departure. Agents and allies were reported on the Continent, and Lords Fairfax, Wharton, Manchester,

¹⁰² *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, pp. 329-332, rewarded 382.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 226; Reresby, *Memoirs*, August 2, 1663.

¹⁰⁴ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, pp. 77, 235, at Exeter and Barnstaple, 231, 282, Devon; *Hist. MSS. Comm. Reports*, XV, 7, p. 96.

¹⁰⁵ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663, p. 245.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 263, 278-281. They suspect this, pp. 237, 258; cf. also pp. 225-226, 234-236, 289.

and General Waller, with several members of Parliament were said to be implicated.¹⁰⁷

The information was too precise and trustworthy to be neglected and as October 12 approached every precaution was taken to prevent or crush the rising. In London, so far from the Guards being sent away, they were reviewed by the king himself on the day set for the insurrection, and no small fault found with their condition.¹⁰⁸ Garrison commanders were despatched to their posts, lord lieutenants and local officials warned to be on their guard in all the disaffected districts.¹⁰⁹ The Duke of Buckingham, who had hurried to his lord lieutenancy of Yorkshire, called out the militia, set guards at Stamford Bridge and elsewhere, and ordered troops to rendezvous at Pomfret and Ferrybridge.¹¹⁰ The York city train-bands were called out, two regiments left to defend the city and the others sent to the West where the greatest danger was supposed to be.¹¹¹ Similar measures were taken in Westmoreland, Durham, Hull, Newcastle, Beverly and Leeds.¹¹² The great floods hampered the activity of the authorities, but by October 11 they had several thousand men under arms, and were fully prepared for any ordinary rising.¹¹³ The conspirators, on the other hand, even more hampered by the weather, surrounded and betrayed, were at the mercy of the government. None the less they made three attempts to rise. At Kaberrig in Westmoreland less than a score of men assembled under the lead of Captain Atkinson and Captain Waller. Discouraged by the fewness of their numbers, the apathy of the country and the preparations made against them, they rode to Birkey and dispersed. The same fate overtook a similar body under Captain Jones at Muggleswick Park in Durham. The most formidable gathering meanwhile took place at Farnley Wood near Leeds. There some three hundred men under Captain Rymer and Captain Oates threw up entrenchments and made other preparations for defence. But their numbers did not increase as they hoped, their resolution failed, and they dispersed before morning.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁷ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, pp. 257-292 *passim*. William Stockdale, M.P. for Knaresborough, seems to have been implicated, *ibid.*, p. 621.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 257-279; Pepys, October 12, 1663.

¹⁰⁹ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, pp. 294, 297.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 296; *Hist. MSS. Comm. Reports*, XII. 2, p. 144 (Duke of Buckingham at Pomfret with 1500 men).

¹¹¹ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, p. 294.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 284, 294, 298-299, 301, 305.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

¹¹⁴ This account is based largely on the unpublished reports of Sir T. Gower,

Thus ended in almost pitiable failure the much heralded plot of 1663. There remained but little for the government to do but to hunt down and punish the conspirators.¹¹⁵ Many were seized and held for trial at York and Appleby. Some committed suicide, some treated for pardon. Many of the leaders, including Jones, Richardson, the two Atkinsons and Mason, escaped to Scotland, to Ireland, to Holland, to London, or remained hidden in the North.¹¹⁶ Captain Robert Atkinson who had been imprisoned at Appleby escaped and planned the rescue of his fellow-prisoners, but the train-bands were called out, his plan failed and he was presently recaptured.¹¹⁷ Mason was taken, escaped and was retaken, but the whereabouts of his associate, the Irish conspirator Blood, who was suspected of a hand in this new business, remained unknown.¹¹⁸ The government spared no efforts to unravel the plot and punish the plotters.¹¹⁹ The trial of the conspirators in January resulted in the execution of eighteen at York, three at Leeds and four at Appleby. Many others were sentenced to imprisonment, and a hundred or more released on security.¹²⁰ Later in the year some further executions raised the number of victims to about thirty. Strong efforts were made to connect greater names with the design.¹²¹ On the first alarm Colonel Hutchinson, Colonel Neville and Major Salway had been arrested. But neither from them nor from any one else could evidence be obtained against men of rank or fortune. Atkinson's confession which purported to reach the inner secrets of the design was like many such, stimulating alarm and curiosity but containing little the government did not already know, and that little incapable of proof. The plan, he said, was laid in the south. Dr. Richardson, John Joplin and Paul Hobson were among the original leaders but

Record Office Papers, 1663, vol. LXXXI, no. 77 (noted in *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, p. 298). Cf. also Reresby, *Memoirs*, August 2, 1663; *Surtees Society Publications*, XL. xix ff., 102 ff., for depositions; *Hist. MSS. Comm. Reports*, XIII. 2, pp. 7, 93; *Secret Hist.*, II. 55 ff.; Clarendon, *Life, Cont.*, p. 503 ff.; *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, pp. 299, 301, 312, 346-347.

¹¹⁵ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, October to December, 1663, *passim*.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 331, 371-376, 405, 441; *Hist. MSS. Comm. Reports*, Heathcote, p. 145.

¹¹⁷ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, pp. 332-336, 340; *Hist. MSS. Comm. Reports*, XII. 7, p. 31.

¹¹⁸ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, pp. 323-465 *passim*.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 360-389 *passim*.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 431, 523-524; *Hist. MSS. Comm. Reports*, Ormonde, III. 140; *Surtees Society Pubs.*, XL. xix ff., 102 ff.

¹²¹ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, pp. 63, 301 ff., 314-324, (the Duke of Buckingham was suspected and his request for more troops refused, 301); *Hist. MSS. Comm. Reports*, XV. 7, p. 96.

Hobson played false. Their purpose was to compel the King to keep his promise of toleration to all but Catholics, remove the hearth money, excise, and other taxes, and restore a Gospel ministry and magistracy. Fairfax, Manchester and Sir John Lawson knew of the design but disowned it, and Wharton was privy to it. Albemarle and Buckingham were to have been killed, Hull, Appleby and Carlisle seized. Ludlow and Goffe were to have led parties against Whitehall. Many in the Life Guards, in Albemarle's regiment, in the fleet, in Scotland and oversea, with men of quality in England were engaged. Atkinson, reputed an old informer, was said to be false and subtle, and his examinations seemed to indicate either that this was true or that, as had been reported, the plot was so arranged that no one could betray it if he would.¹²²

Despite such unsatisfactory information as this the whole matter henceforth assumed a new aspect. In place of the vague and uncertain rumors of earlier years the government had now certain undisputed facts to deal with. It had actually seized some revolutionaries and learned the names of others. It proceeded therefore to complete its information and its captures.¹²³ Holland was the first objective. Thence the refugee Colonel Bampffield and a spy, Custis, furnished news of their associates.¹²⁴ The latter, indeed, interviewed Dr. Richardson himself. The doctor admitted having written the declaration, but attributed the authorship of the address to the Quakers to one Denham. He had left York August 6, the day Captain Rymer landed in England to take part in the rising, and so had no share in the actual insurrection. That, he declared, failed on account of poor leadership, Walters, who was to have led them, having gone mad. Their numbers were small but their faith strong, and they believed miracles would attend their godly design. This was vague enough and the government turned to other measures.¹²⁵ The informers were rewarded, the leading prisoners respited for further examination, and many attempts made to suppress a seditious pamphlet *Mene Tekel* attributed to Captain Jones.¹²⁶ Much energy was fruitlessly expended in an effort to seize one Sydrach Lester a shipmaster carrying revolutionary contraband be-

¹²² *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, pp. 352-540 *passim*.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 294, 309, 405, 476 and below.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 386, 505.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 505, 512-513, 521. Walters and Carr implicated Neville, Salway and Wildman, *ibid.*, pp. 391-392. A plan for a Parliament of 300 members, p. 404.

¹²⁶ Published by an old offender, Elizabeth Calvert, *ibid.*, p. 465.

tween England and Holland.¹²⁷ An old officer of the Duke of York sent in reports of his earnest effort to kill or kidnap Ludlow and his fellow refugees in Switzerland.¹²⁸ The political prisoners were again redistributed among the prisons, in accordance with the policy of never leaving them long in the same place. And finally,¹²⁹ measures were taken to crush or overawe Dissent in those places where an investigation set on foot in the preceding August had showed that it was practically undisturbed. With the situation well in hand the administration prepared to meet Parliament.¹³⁰

The Houses came together in March 1664. It is not surprising that their attention was directed to the recent disturbances. Upon these the King laid the stress of his speech. One question, in particular, of vital importance to them, he said, had been raised by the insurrection. Some plotters had declared for the Long Parliament, others maintained that the present Parliament had expired according to the Triennial Act of 1641, and proposed, in the absence of new writs, to assemble and choose another themselves. Ought they not, therefore, to repeal the act which made their own existence a matter of question? His argument was effective. Within a week the Triennial Act was repealed, and the existing royalist Anglican Parliament perpetuated, subject only to royal will. Nor was this all. Recent revelations had convinced the majority that the conventicles were hotbeds of sedition, which neither the old acts of Elizabeth nor their own measures had checked. A bill against such meetings which had failed in the Lords during the previous session was now revived under the influence of the plot and passed both houses, as the Conventicle Act. Thenceforth it was illegal for more than five persons besides a family to meet for religious service outside a church.¹³¹

With the passage of this measure, the executions for the plot of 1663, and the repeal of the Triennial Act, the first period of Restoration conspiracies, and of its politics generally, ended in this

¹²⁷ He was captured, escaped and joined the Dutch navy, *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, pp. 279-387 *passim*.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 380, 398; Ludlow, ed. Firth, II. 359, 382 ff., 482.

¹²⁹ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, pp. 430-431, 438, 461; *Hist. MSS. Comm. Reports*, Heathcote, p. 144.

¹³⁰ *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, pp. 293-298, 306-348 *passim*, 452-460, 433-458 (examinations), 301, 350 (proclamations, old soldiers to leave London).

¹³¹ Clarendon, *Life, Cont.*, p. 506 ff.; *Parl. Hist.*, IV. 289-296; *Cal. St. P. Dom.*, 1663-1664, pp. 552-559. Many alarms and train-bands out, Pepys, March 27, 1664. The Nonconformists defied or evaded these measures. Cf. Calamy, *Memorials*, I. 177, 307, 514, II. 387, etc.

spring of 1664 with the triumph of the administration. The royalist Anglicans had legislated themselves into the control of the church livings and the borough corporations. The Parliament which they controlled was indefinitely perpetuated. The meetings of their rivals were made unlawful. The efforts of the party of force to overthrow them had not only failed but had largely contributed to Anglican success. So true was this that the defeated party declared that these so-called plots were, in fact, urged on by those in power for their own ends.¹³² In the Sparry-Yarrington episode, possibly in some cases beside, this charge seems to contain an element of truth. But no one can read the information which deluged the secretaries without feeling that, plot or no plot, with all allowance for exaggeration and untruth, there was enough to cause such a government as that of Charles II. serious uneasiness. It is not incredible that some men played on these fears for their own ends. It has been admitted that the use of spies was excessive and the results harmful. But it was not the first time nor the last that men in such a position have been moved by panic. Stronger governments than that of Charles II. under slighter provocation have resorted to like measures to crush less formidable foes. And it cannot be denied that, whether as a result of its own policy or not, events increasingly demonstrated the existence of a revolutionary party opposed to the English government in England, Scotland, Ireland and on the Continent. Never formidable enough in mere numbers to seriously threaten a government which had reasonable support at home and no foreign complications, this was none the less a source of danger. The revolutionary plans clearly reveal the direction in which that danger lay. The widespread discontent among the masses over the government's religious and financial policy offered a fertile field for conspiracy and possible rebellion. The seizure of a defensible position and successful resistance might precipitate civil war and popular support of the revolutionaries. The death of the King and a disturbed succession would doubtless have accomplished the same end. A foreign war might afford similar opportunity. The weakness of the revolutionaries lay in the mutual antagonism of the various elements opposed to the government. Their dislike of the administration was equalled or

¹³² Cf. Neal, *Puritans*, p. 530; *Secret Hist.*, I. 462; Rapin, ed. 1769, pp. 860, 889; Burnet, *passim*; Ludlow, II. 341, etc. Howell, *State Trials*, VI. 226, says of Tong, etc., that government greatly exaggerated but there was certainly some danger. This seems a fair statement of the whole matter. Cf. also Lister, *Life of Clarendon*, II. 280 ff.

exceeded by their dislike of each other, and upon this the party in power could safely rely. None the less the plotters had materially influenced the course of events in spite of their own failure and the disasters they had brought upon Nonconformity in general. They had, it is true, contributed more than any other force to the triumph of their opponents and to the enactment of the so-called persecuting measures. But they had at the same time helped to make compromise impossible, and by their indirect assistance in preventing comprehension had assisted in deepening the division between Churchman and Dissenter.

Doubtless their importance was as much magnified by the Anglicans then as it has been neglected since. They had caused much uneasiness, but they had failed in their two chief plans, insurrection and the seizure or assassination of the King. If matters had remained as they were in the spring of 1664, that period might well have seen the end of revolution and revolutionaries alike, and their epitaph would have been written in the statutes against Nonconformity they had given their enemies so much assistance in enacting. From this fate they were saved by the third alternative, foreign war. Clarendon's rivals in the Council at this juncture espoused the cause of the merchants against the Dutch as they had hitherto championed the same dissenting interest against the Anglicans. With the outbreak of hostilities between England and Holland the history of the English revolutionaries enters on a new phase.

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